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EDITORIAL

A religion should have a definite objective: to supply human hearts with whatever knowledge, conviction, or spiritual ability is lacking in the panoply of armor and weapons needed to cope successfully with the tribulations of their times. When the Word made Flesh tells his disciples, in the Gospel of John, that in the world they shall have tribulation, but that they should be of good cheer because he has overcome the world, he could hardly have meant that he had overcome the world in the sense that he had stripped the world clean of its tribulations and left it harmless, like a rattler without fangs; he must have meant that by reason of his religious equipment he had survived, or neutralized, or risen above the world's tribulations, and that by learning from him they could acquire the same religious equipment and defy the world's tribulations as he had.

The purpose of religion, then, is to supply the human being with the powers and defenses he needs to overcome the tribulations of his earthly life. But since those tribulations are constantly changing their complexion and methods of attack, it follows that religion has got to keep its eyes open, recognize each new set of tribulations as they appear, and be prepared to supply human hearts with correspondingly new powers and defenses wherewith to overcome them.

Back in Apostolic times the world confronted ordinary human hearts with a mass of social injustices that filled them with despair. They lacked both wisdom and ability to rectify the condition. All religion could do was to recommend the simplicity of the Cynic, or the self-deception of the Epicurean, or the defiant hardihood of the Stoic; as much as to say: don't try to change these conditions, for you can't; this earthly life is but an unsavory interlude; you do not belong here, you are a stranger here, Heaven is your home; shut your eyes; grit your teeth; hang on; it will pass; he that endureth to the end shall be saved; death will release you from this desert drear. And then, under my ministrations, your soul will find itself in Heaven.

From that time to this the dual objective of our so-called Christian religion has been Escape from this world, and Personal Salvation in the next. Plenty of learned men are making every possible effort to keep this religious objective valid and in full operation.

But, although our modern world still confronts us with its tribulations, they are of a wholly different complexion, and therefore they require a wholly different sort of treatment. A man arrayed in the traditional Christian panoply would be just about as well equipped to deal with our tribulations as Edward the Black Prince and his brother John of Gaunt, in their hauberks of chain mail and their great two-handed swords, to engage in modern warfare.

The tragedy of Jesus was that he tried to overcome the tribulations of his day by means of an equipment about two thousand years ahead of his times. But the two thousand years are up. Now, faced by our tribulations, which as Paul says are not flesh and blood, but rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places and behind iron curtains, nowhere can we find a religion so exactly fitted to our need as his religion of love to God, and Man, persistent patience, sympathy, understanding, and a tireless magnanimity. Literally, Jesus of Nazareth has come into his own. His is the most modern voice of our times. The question is: are we modern enough to recognize him in the full wealth of his significance for us. —C. E. P.

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"IN GOD WE TRUST"

by Carl Bihldorff

There is a question in the minds of some of us whether the May Meetings of the American Unitarian Association and its related gatherings are as fruitful as they might be. When we pick up a newspaper and read that the Unitarian Ministers' Association at its meeting on May 21 passed a resolution which criticized the use of the motto "In God We Trust" which appears on United States coins, we know—regardless of what the basic purpose of the resolution may have been—that Unitarianism suffered a setback. Such publicity gives those who wish us ill heavy ammunition, and as you know it wasn't long before that ammunition was hurled at us with signal effectiveness. Furthermore, it grieves the hearts of most Unitarians to find one of their deepest religious convictions treated with such careless abuse.

At the Annual Meeting of the American Unitarian Association on May 25, 1954, President Eliot spoke of those among us who, accepting the privileges of the freedom we espouse, pay little heed to the responsibilities which make that freedom possible. Many present felt that his remarks were directed to those who framed and passed this resolution. For its implication, if not its intention, is that Unitarians are opposed to any position which places a trust in God.

However, before we prejudge the matter, let me tell what I was told did happen. First, the members of the Association met beginning at nine-thirty on the morning of May 21. After three hours of business and speeches, they adjourned for lunch. Following the luncheon they reconvened for further business. It was after three o'clock in the afternoon, when many of the members had departed from the meeting, that a resolution was presented which expressed opposition to a bill before Congress which proposes that in connection with the Roman Catholic Marian Year a stamp should be issued celebrating the Virgin Mary's assumption. It was pointed out that on the grounds of the traditional American principle of the separation of church and state that the use of stamps or coins for religious propaganda would be a violation of that principle. Someone pointed out to the meeting at this juncture that United States coins already bear a religious motto or inscription, "In God We Trust." Thereupon, the resolution was extended to include the current motto on coins as well as any future religious propaganda, and was passed on a voice vote.

One person present stated that the motto "In God We Trust" was added to United States coins during the administration of Theodore Roosevelt, and that he had opposed its use, albeit unsuccessfully.

Now, as we all know, the action of the Unitarian Ministers' Association will not result in the removal of this motto from our coins, but the proposal to remove it and the later publicity given to this action has been extremely damaging to our cause.

I realize, of course, that the Unitarian Ministers' Association is a completely autonomous body with respect to the American Unitarian Association, and that its pronouncements are not subject to the review of any other body. Nevertheless, I see a close link between the Unitarian Ministers' Association and the American Unitarian Association, and it is to this link that I wish now to direct your thought.

The American Unitarian Association is primarily an Association of churches united in this Association to further specific purposes enunciated in the By-laws of the Association. The principal purposes are stated as follows:

1. Diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of religion which Jesus taught as love to God and love to man.
2. Strengthen the churches and fellowships which unite in the Association for more and better work for the Kingdom of God.

A Board of Directors is set up under the By-laws to carry out the work of the Association, and one of the responsibilities of the Board is to create a Ministerial Fellowship Committee which has jurisdiction over membership in the fellowship of Unitarian ministers. In other words, any minister who desires to serve a Unitarian church knows that without the approval of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee of the American Unitarian Association, the probability of any Unitarian church calling him to its ministry is extremely unlikely.

Now this Committee, created by the Board of Directors, which in turn receives authorization under the Association's By-laws to "diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of religion which Jesus taught as love to God and love to man," this Committee has long taken the position that whatever theological belief a candidate holds shall not prejudice the Committee in granting fellowship status. It assumes that it can grant fellowship to a man whether he be an atheist or a humanist or a theist. This position is taken because Unitarians are said to hold in high regard the principles of freedom and tolerance.

My contention is that our Association is not free. Its freedom is restricted by the responsibility placed upon it through the By-laws under which it operates, and by what right it feels free to grant ministerial status to anyone who does not honor the By-laws of the Association is beyond my comprehension.

With respect to our own church, the First Parish in Brookline, when a person joins it he is less free as an individual than he was before he joined. His freedom is restricted by our covenant to which in joining he has pledged himself. Our covenant reads: "In the love of truth and in the spirit of Jesus, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man." By joining our church a person voluntarily limits his freedom to conform to the purposes for which we, as a church, exist. There may be a church somewhere in this broad land which commits its members to freedo and freedom alone, but if such a church exists I would say that its freedom is meaningless. For freedom can have no meaning apart from specific commitments and responsibilities. If a person wants complete freedom he had better stay away from the church, for every church stands for something.

Let me say again that the American Unitarian Association is primarily an association of member churches and that these member churches determine what the purposes of the Association shall be. In recent years, however, the Association appears to have operated on the assumption that the men to whom it grants ministerial status need not in their personal beliefs conform to the purposes for which the Association exists. And as a result of this strange policy theological anarchy now reigns in our Unitarian household.

Long ago Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." However, the present position of the American Unitarian Association seems to be that God is irrelevant. The important thing is freedom. By its actions it supports the position that freedom is primary. And the fact that freedom has led us to theological anarchy (the present state of Unitarianism) seems to concern them not at all.

Last spring we beheld a strange spectacle in Washington. We saw a representative of one branch of our government state that his freedom cannot honor the responsibility of another branch of our government. Senator McCarthy says he will not honor a presidential directive, but will encourage government employees to give him classified and secret information which they have sworn not to disclose. Now if the junior senator from Wisconsin is successful in maintaining his position, we shall have in Washington not a government but anarchy. The tradition of our government since Washington's administration has been that the three branches of the government —the executive, the legislative, and the judicial —have areas of responsibility which are inviolable. This tradition, based upon law, has kept in balance the powers of the three branches of our government, and today when a clash arises the instrument which can save us from anarchy is the Constitution. By referring to it it can be determined who has what responsibility. Without this instrument and the honor and respect given it by those whose authority stems from it our government would long since have been destroyed.

Now the American Unitarian Association does not have three balancing branches in its government. But like the government of the United States it does have an authoritative instrument from which its powers and purposes are derived —its By-laws. I cannot understand, therefore, how a committee appointed by the Board of Directors under the present By-laws can confer ministerial status to men who are opposed to the purposes of the Association.

In the past ten or more years strange things have been going on within the American Unitarian Association, and I believe that back of them, in part, is the theological anarchy the Association itself has promoted through its failure to live up to its By-laws.

For one thing, some of the most important positions within the denomination are held by men whose humanist beliefs are at variance with the purpose stated in our By-laws.

The Unitarian Christian Fellowship, of which I am a founding member, was formed because of an attempt by a committee appointed by the Association to commit the Association to a platform in which the name of God was intentionally omitted. The Unitarian Christian Fellowship was denounced bitterly as a divisive force within the denomination because of its stand, and this despite the fact that our By-laws state that the purpose of the Association shall be to "diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of religion which Jesus taught as love to God and love to man."

We know also that the ugly head of Communism has appeared within our ranks. The President of our Association, Dr. Eliot, has said, "In my opinion there was a deliberate attempt on the part of leaders of the Communist movement to infiltrate the American Unitarian Association, with the hope that they might in effect take over the American Unitarian Association."

In view of these and other disturbing conditions within our denomination, I think we ought not be surprised to hear that a group of Unitarian ministers treated lightly the motto "In God We Trust."

It was upon the conclusion of the Civil War that an upsurging of religious fervor permeated

this land and sought to express itself in various ways. Out of that fervor came the suggestion that our coins ought to bear some inspiring religious statement. Among the phrases considered were: God our Trust, Our Country and Our God. But the Secretary of the Treasury finally decided that the words, In God We Trust, most appropriately expressed the sentiment which Americans felt. Since 1866 those words have appeared on all coins issued by the Treasury.

Today, as a result of the tragedy of two world wars and the possibility of a third to come, there is again an upsurging of religious faith and seeking throughout our land. In increasing numbers people are turning to the church for guidance, comfort and strength. At no time since we entered this twentieth century has Unitarianism had such an opportunity as confronts it today. But we shall surely fail our opportunity if we continue to welcome into our ministry men who feel that God is irrelevant or unimportant.

Should we not demand that our Association fulfill the purposes for which it was given birth: "To diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of religion which Jesus taught as love to God and love to man"?

When Jesus was asked to sum up the substance of the Law, he replied with these words, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment . . ."

The Prayer

Lord God, our Father, grant that our lives may be drawn to thee by our and humanity's need. And may our Fellowship bear a deeper witness to thy glory, goodness and love that we and a stricken world may find the courage and the strength to endure and to overcome. *Amen.*

THE SPIRIT THAT MADE AMERICA

by Edward Jay Manning

When I find myself becoming over-censorious about America, and when I listen to others speak disparagingly about this country, I am tempted to ask—Why should not our criticism be tempered by at least a suggestion of appreciation for what is truly fine in our national life? Of course, there are flagrant evils which must be aired, and corrected. But, when you have drawn up the bill of indictment, it still remains true that you and I are the beneficiaries of blessings which we cannot begin to appreciate, because they have always been part and parcel of our lives. We never miss the water of freedom, because the well has never run dry. And the reason why that well has never run dry is the simple fact that the spirit which made America has persisted down through the years since first we became a free and independent nation.

Certainly one characteristic of the spirit which made America is the individualism which is expressed in the immortal words of the Declaration of Independence—"all men are created equal."

To be sure, the cynic may remind us that this is not true to life. Out there in the world all men are not equal. All men have not the same opportunities. In actual practice there are Americans who are not the equals of other Americans in many particulars. Racial, religious and social barriers are still strong enough to prevent the intermingling of all of our people upon a plane of absolute equality. Yet, when all has been said that can be said about discrimination, it still remains true, that the spirit that made America is a spirit of equality for all men. The founding fathers envisioned a land where every man had the same rights as every other man, and it is your duty and my duty to make our contribution toward the actualization of that ideal which flamed from the minds of those who "conceived this nation, in liberty, and dedicated it to the proposition that all men are created equal."

While we cannot overlook the gross violations of the spirit of equality which have existed down through the years and which, alas, still do exist to some extent, we must not allow ourselves to be blinded to the very real existence of equality for all men.

This is a Republic, and on election day every citizen has the right to vote for those who aspire to the various offices in municipal, state and national governments. Moreover, the ballot that anyone casts is a secret ballot. You do not have to vote YES in the presence of a member of the Secret Police, for fear that if you voted NO you might find yourself by nightfall spirited away or liquidated. On the long queues that form in front of our polling places on Election Day, your vote and my vote will count for just as much as the vote of the highest official in the land. Here is an instance where "all men are created equal."

Go into our Courts, and you will find that all men are created equal. A friend of mine who is a psychologist in the City Courts once made an interesting observation. She said, "In our courts, every man is addressed as Mister." That may seem too commonplace for comment, yet it is revealing. The lowliest person hailed before the judge, or asked to give testimony, is addressed

by that title which is the mark of respect which one free man gives to another. In the courtroom every man is addressed as Mister.

Do you recall the nine-months-long trial that resulted in the conviction and sentencing of the eleven top Communists in 1949? The press, during those months, told of the tactics employed by the lawyers for the Communists and how they attempted to wear down the exemplary patience of Federal Judge Harold R. Medina. No one can say that the judge did not lean over backwards to be fair to these defendants and their legal representatives during this lengthy, exhausting hearing. The Communists were given their day in Court. They were not summoned before some court martial, there to be swiftly sentenced to death. In the courts, all men are created equal.

In our New York public schools you will find that equality prevails. White children, negro children, oriental children; children of Protestant, Catholic, Jewish faiths; children of the rich, of the poor, of the middle-class—there they are—all occupying the same rooms, being taught by the same teachers, mingling on terms of absolute equality. Here is America in the making, and the spirit that made America—the insistence upon the rights of all men to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness here in the classroom, translated into terms of reality.

In daily life, too, the history of this country abounds with ilustrations of the fact that given ability, character and ambition, all men have an equal chance to the places of preferment. Yes, it is so that a Catholic would stand a poor chance of being elected president, and a colored man might not find it easy to head a great corporation, or a Jew to become a leader of the 400. Yet, a Catholic has run for the presidency, Marian Anderson has sung before the elite, and a Jew is a Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

All men are not yet equal in every respect in these United States, but the ideal of the founders of the nation is still potent, and at least you and I have the right to work for the complete actualization of that ideal. It is the spirit that made America which says that all men were created equal—and that spirit bids all of us to work toward that idea so that all men may, in fact, be equal. "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him."

Again, the spirit that made America is characterized by reliance upon the willingness of the people to be "obedient to the unenforceable."

Pick up the daily newspaper, and you will find yourself reading article after article which gives the sordid details of crimes of violence, but, out of 150 millions of people in this land, an infinitesimal fraction are violators of the law. The vast majority of our people are "obedient to the unenforceable." They can be trusted to do the right, even though there might be some temporary advantage in doing wrong. They are decent, not through fear, but through choice.

Just now, there is a lot of talk about Juvenile Delinquency. This is a fact which you and I cannot and should not sidestep. Juvenile Delinquency is with us. But, I think that we should not overlook the obverse of Juvenile Delinquency, namely, Juvenile Excellence. The majority of our young people are not delinquents. On the contrary, they are fine, clean, upright future citizens of whom the Republic may well be proud. They, however, do not get their names in the papers. Their deeds are not the subject of radio comment. I think that it is high time we stopped prating so much about Juvenile Delinquency and paid a little more attention to Juvenile Excellence—the millions of young people who are "obedient to the unenforceable"; those boys and girls who are doing what they know is right, because they want to be loyal to the best in themselves.

When you become despondent about these United States, just remember that there are millions of fine Americans who never gain any publicity, because they are true to the spirit that made America; they are "obedient to the unenforceable."

"So God created a man in His own image, in the image of God created He him."

And surely, the spirit which made America was essentially a religious spirit.

The founding fathers were men who believed in God—and in human brotherhood. However they may have expressed that faith in words, what they did, and what their successors who caught their spirit did, is evident to all who have eyes to see.

Here we are a nation of forty-eight sovereign states. Each state is jealous of its rights, and is alert to prevent any infringement of those rights. Yet, in spite of the fact that sectional differences bristle with problems, we remain a united nation. Anyone who is familiar with the history of this land knows how difficult it was to bring about a union, and how costly it has been to preserve that union. If we are a great nation today, and not a swarm of petty sovereign nations, each armed to the teeth, and rattling the sabre at the other, it is because the spirit that made America has infused into our people a recognition of the essential worth of man as man, and this is the underlying principle of true religion. The United States is a concrete example of what the Psalmist meant what he said, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." The bond which holds this country together is not force, but an appreciation of the blessings of brotherhood.

To these shores have come the peoples of the world. Every nation under the sun is represented in the constituency of our people. There are in

these United States concentrations of people representing the largest Jewish, Irish, German, Swedish, and other national groups in the world. America has been called the Melting Pot. I prefer to call it The Elevator—the means by which people with varying national and racial backgrounds have been lifted above the barriers of nationalism and race to the unity which is embraced in the high Christian doctrine of the Brotherhood of Man. "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." Here in our beloved land, this saying of the Bible finds fulfillment. For here in literal fact all nations of men dwell together as members of a common household.

And out of the brotherhood of man which is revealed in our America, there comes the promise of a brighter day in the world of men in Europe and Asia and wherever narrow, nationalistic divisions spawn the seeds of strife. For, if the sons of all the nations can here live together in harmony, why is it not conceivable that the day may come when Tennyson's dream will come true—"the dream of a Parliament of Man, a Federation of the World"? In science, if an experiment can be performed successfully just once, it outweighs any number of failures. Here in the American laboratory it has been proven that all nations of men can dwell together as one people, and that successful experiment in living establishes the fact that it could be done any number of times, and on any size scale.

Running through American history, and exemplified in multitudes of lives, is an ardent faith in the reality of God. Wisely, the fathers declared against an established church, and made the establishment of such a church impossible. Religious freedom has been one of the keystones of our national existence. All too many of our people are not affiliated with any particular church. Yet, I doubt not that there burns in the average American heart a warm faith in the existence of God, and His availability as the source of all power and all joy. Indeed, signs are not lacking that out of the welter of the awful Second World War, there has emerged a genuine renaissance of religion here in America. Faith in God is often nurtured in the fires of adversity. Our nation has not suffered as Europe and Asia have suffered. Never since the War of 1812 have we known what it is to have the rude foot of an invader stride across our soil. America has been, of all nations, most richly blessed. It may be that just because we have been so fortunate, religion has never been to us what it has been to the European. Today, we know through sad experience what it is to face the most frightful forces of evil ever let loose upon the world. Out of the experience of anguish, there may—I believe there will—arise a faith that this world is the scene of something highly significant; the faith that this nation has an appointment with destiny; the faith that the band of Pilgrim fathers who braved the stormy Atlantic that they might found upon the stern shores of New England a nation where God could be worshipped freely, builded better than they knew, and that out of their efforts there will come into being a nation which will lead the world into that peace which passeth all understanding—the peace which flows from faith in the worth of the individual, obedience to the unenforceable, and confidence in the abiding presence of God within the soul of every man.

Truly, the spirit that made America was the faith that "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him."

WE WANT TO BE UNITARIANS

by Ralph E. Kyper

The position of Christians within the Unitarian fellowship is becoming an increasingly awkward one, and forces us to a reconsideration of the whole problem of our denominational affiliation. In a movement distinctly Christian in its origins and traditions, and now given over to a vague secular optimism, if not downright atheism, we have become strangers in our own household. We are reduced to the status of what is made to appear an insignificant faction of malcontents. But Unitarianism has come to mean many things that we cannot follow.

Some two years ago, after I had preached as a guest at a Lenten service in one of our churches, I was approached by a perplexed father. His daughter had recently enrolled in a midwestern university. Soon after her arrival there she found her way to the local Unitarian church—once. Neither God nor Jesus was mentioned in the "service," and the sermon was a lecture on Karl Marx! Like Emerson's worshipper, she felt cheated. Indeed many people are asking for bread in our churches and getting a stone.

Or, ponder the following gem from a sermon preached by a Vacutarian in one of our Greater Boston churches last January:

> . . . Belief or non-belief in God is not the important question. We should ask, not who be-

> lieves and who does not believe, but who believe *rationally* in God, and who disbelieves on rational grounds. Either position can be defended, because there is no difference between them except in the *use of words*.
>
> The inflammatory words: theist and humanist, have ceased to be descriptive and accurate. Let us make our common religion with or without God—a force for uniting and strengthening us as instruments of human benefit.

In other words, belief in God is optional, and therefore one of the irrelevancies of this glittering new "universal religion." Shades of the Star Island declaration!

Obviously then the two or more groups under our banner—united by little more than a name, a building, and some invested funds—represent divergent and irreconcilable points of view, a house divided against itself. And the vagaries of some are a hindrance to others. To be a Unitarian, in the popular mind, is simply to be an eccentric or a misfit. When we visit our relatives in a university community, my wife has to explain, "My husband isn't that kind of a Unitarian!" This should not be. We have too much to live down.

And so, what is the practical answer? The number of loyal and devoted ministers who have reluctantly withdrawn from our fellowship presents a serious challenge. And who can doubt that there is more sound Christian liberalism in other denominations than in our own?—or that the rift within is deeper and broader than the difference between ourselves and the next most liberal denomination?

But retreat should be our last alternative. The question then arises as to just how long one can remain in a fellowship with which he does not find himself in agreement. George Tyrrell gives us an answer:

> I uphold the duty of each man to stay within and work for his own household as long as he conscientiously can. . . . I will do nothing unnecessarily to procure my own excommunication, and when it happens I will stand on the doorstep and knock and ring and make myself a nuisance in every way.

We remain Unitarians not just for our nuisance value, but because we ministers have an obligation to our parishioners (most of whom I dare say are Christians), and because we have a loyalty to a tradition which is peculiarly ours. If any are under a moral duty to withdraw, they are not the Christians.

Fortunate for us is the fact of our congregational polity, which permits us to remain Unitarians in a curtailed way for the present. Much that is published in our name we cannot endorse. The Lenten manuals for the last two years have been non-religious, and therefore unusable. The religious education materials merely duplicate those of the day-school with a pseudo-religious moral tagged on; and the child is left to work out his faith as best he can with little knowledge of his religious traditions. Still, we want to be Unitarians, because we know that the real Unitarianism is a religion of great affirmations, and not the stunted thing palmed off in its name. We shall try to be Unitarians as long as we can.

PRAYER

O God, our Father, the beauty of the morning awakens the thought of thee and the beauty of thy holiness; the promise and meaning of our human life find their corroboration in the remembrance of thy holy purpose. We bring thee the first freshness of our praise, the first outpourings of our adoration. Thou hast guarded us through the night, and when we awake we are still with thee. Let our worship teach us a lesson: to look no more with unseeing eyes, but to discover thee in the world about us, thy purpose in all its history, thy mercy in each sunrise, thy service in each opportunity. Give us wisdom to understand that thou hast something for each one of us to do, and help us find our place in thy service. As we work for thee with hand and brain, may we learn to trust and love thee with heart and soul.

Prepare us for the new duties and unfamiliar opportunities that lie before us. If they seem beyond our power, let them not be beyond our consecration, but let our willingness bring us a skill we had not suspected. So help us to make our lives valuable in thy sight, worthwhile to our world, and a satisfaction unto ourselves. Thus may we discover how real thou art, and how strong and sustaining is thy love.

Accept our thanks for daily blessings, for trials and dangers escaped, for all happy reunions of hearts and homes, for dear ones restored, for temptations overcome, and for manhood still undishonored. Rebuke in us all indolence, and the complaints that arise from indolence. Let us no longer be vagrants in thine ordered world, no longer mere idlers watching the strife, but put us in closer touch with the heart of all true living. Arouse us to deserve thy gifts, that we may be counted among thy faithful ones to whom no human interest is foreign, but every human hope and victory is personal and precious.

We lay open our hearts before thee now. Our pleasures we bring for thy blessing; our sins for thy forgiveness; our needs for thy satisfaction; and our ambitions for thy sanction. Lord, meet us here with thine answer to our prayer, and let us not go hence without thy blessing in our hearts. Thine be the glory forevermore: *Amen.*

HOW EXTINCT IS THE DODO?

by Ford Lewis

Whenever Unitarian beliefs come up for discussion, the concept of "discipleship to advancing truth" is sure to be brought out as an important idea among us. It has been a favorite phrase with Unitarians for a number of years, and we use it often to stress the *tentative* quality which truth has for most of us. To our grandfathers truth was a solid rock, a safe and sure refuge, and once a man had accepted it he could build his life upon it and never have to fear that it would crumble away beneath him. Truth was something you could count on.

To us truth is more like a moving goal. It is a target that never stands still. Our mental picture of truth arises from our recognition that the religious truths of one age, no matter how enlightened and emancipated that age may have been, have never been satisfactory for all ages to come. Truth has a way of shifting its ground as our minds encompass more knowledge, and we insist on being allowed to discover it for ourselves. The rejected and despised heresy of one generation becomes the cherished orthodoxy of the next.

A classic example of this is the "truth" of the earth-centered universe. Three hundred years ago everyone believed that the sun, moon and stars rotated around the earth, which stood steady and solid throughout the ages. Today no one believes it. Truth, in other words, has advanced, and the entire civilized world has advanced with it. And at this point we discover that in the last analysis *everyone*, even the most orthodox person, is really a disciple of advancing truth, whether he realizes it or not. If we were not, there could be no such thing as progress. We would all believe and act as our most primitive ancestors believed and acted.

I am sure we have no choice, in an evolving culture, but to embrace the principle of evolving truth, but my purpose this morning is to point out that it is not an unmixed blessing. There are dangers inherent in this method which we ought to be aware of. One of the dangers is that in the world of ideas we may spend our lives living out of a suitcase. Our bags are always packed and ready to go at the drop of a new scientific discovery. With every statement of what we believe today we have to add the caveat that tomorrow may find us holding a completely different position. This can lead us into the error of treating the truths which we live by as the early Christians treated their world. Heaven is our home, we are only pilgrims here. We can become spiritual nomads, afraid to put down roots in the present because we may have to pull them up in the future. We run the risk of becoming perennial sojourners in a new and strange land, never entirely at home, never quite sure who we are or whither we are bound. In such a case, we cannot fail to feel the corrosive and blighting effect of our rootlessness.

Another danger which our method imposes on us is that we can use it as a rationalization of our failure to get down to any specific beliefs. No doubt our grandfathers were guilty of slavish imitation of the past, but at least they knew what they believed. Do we? They were looking backward to a truth that had been revealed, and we tend to look forward to one still to be revealed in the future. We may neglect the hard work of spelling out our faith for today just as much as they did. We affirm that our modern knowledge is more to be trusted than the knowledge of the past, and no doubt it is, because it includes the wisdom of both past and present. Furthermore, it is *our* knowledge, and our knowledge is always the light we must travel by, though it be but a smoky torch and someone else's lantern shine ever so much brighter. We are right in trusting our own insights, but our vulnerability lies in our preference for the truths which we confidently believe the future will open up to us. Like the men of Athens who erected a statue to the unknown god, we are prone to worship the unknown truth. It may turn out, as Paul told the Athenian audience, that we have somehow inadvertently got on the right path. It may be that through some truth as yet unknown to us we will finally achieve deliverance from war and the threat of war, from man's intolerance of his fellow man and from the fears and failures within us. But we cannot afford to wait. We cannot withhold judgment until the evidence is all in, for it never is. There are always more facts being turned up to modify our decisions, and we must be willing to make the adjustment to new information when necessary, but always making the most of the best we know at any given moment.

Well, then, what do we believe? In our bewildering Aladdin's world of 1955, where new truths are being exchanged for old at a faster rate than ever, are there still any truths that are eternal and abiding? A couple of years ago the newspapers announced the discovery of a living fossil, the cœlacanth (*see*-la-kanth), a fish that had been a contemporary of the dinosaurs and was believed to have been extinct for at least 50,000,000 years. It was the second such specimen taken, the first

having been caught in 1938. These awkward fish, believed to have been descended from the same group of fish that gave birth to vertebrates, provide a living link with a time long before human beings appeared on the earth. As I read about the discovery of this strange messenger from the past that had been misplaced for 50,000,000 years, I began to wonder if we might not also discover, or rediscover, some religious values that have been mislaid for a long time.

One of these mislaid virtues is the quality of tenderness. There is no more important social unit than the family, and affection is the one element most necessary for its smooth and successful functioning. Yet it is the one which is receiving the least attention from the persons presumably the most interested in preserving home life. In all the exhaustive investigations by Dr. Kinsey's associates of the relations between the sexes the idea of tenderness never appears. Writers and lecturers in child psychology emphasize the mechanics of child care—feeding, weaning, toilet training, etc.—and people believe they have the secret of making their children whole and happy. What we seem to have forgotten is the most important thing of all, something that existed long before any book was read or written—the natural tenderness of a mother for her child. If this is missing from the family, all the intelligence, all the scientific know-how and all the psychology there is cannot save it from the serious effects of the lack.

Erich Fromm says that tenderness is discouraged in our culture, and that the reason is that our culture is "purpose-oriented." We feel that we must get somewhere. Tenderness would be a fatal weakness in the business world, and so it is especially discouraged in men. Furthermore, in their understandable attempt to gain equality in fact as well as in theory, a substantial number of women tend to play down the differences between the sexes. And in the effort to cast women in the same mold as men, they prevent women from expressing their natural feelings of tenderness. But men need tenderness, and they miss it. As a substitute for it, they turn to other things to bolster their self-esteem. And to get their self-esteem validated, they will try anything, but the point is they are in a constant state of dependence and fear if the door of tenderness and affection is closed to them. Meanwhile women are frustrated too, because they are not allowed to play their natural role with full freedom. Such is the analysis of Erich Fromm and Ashley Montagu, at any rate.

Now this is the commentary that cuts deepest to the root of our contemporary problem, that we should have to be told at all that we ought to be more loving in our homes, and especially that we should have to be told by a psychologist and an anthropologist. People used to know these things instinctively. That's the danger of going by the book. Today, unless it tells us in Dr. Spock's book on child care that we should cherish our children for no purpose at all, but for their own sake, because they are an end in themselves, we are likely to forget all about it. The seat of authority has shifted from the home, where it belongs, and even the church seems to have little voice in the matter of family guidance. Where are the ministers? While Professors Fromm and Montagu are telling us to love one another, while they are suggesting that tenderness is not extinct after all, and that compassion and affection are enduring values that never change, virtues, not for tomorrow but for today, where are the churchmen? A great many of us, I am afraid, are trying to teach psychology.

But the problem involves more than the recovery of the family as the seat of authority, the center of affection and the source of security. It involves the recovery of ourselves as fully validated, self-authenticated persons. Somewhere along the line we have lost our sense of balance. Our spiritual center of gravity is no longer to be found within us. It has shifted to an external location, and the shift has been disastrous. Men are not confident of their own intrinsic worth, aside from such external factors as success, popularity and wealth. We are not sure how much we are worth on waking up in the morning until we read the market report. Our own opinion of ourselves depends on tidings we get from abroad, and we have to go down the check list fairly often to receive the assurance we crave. Am I attractive to the opposite sex? Am I a success? Does my education or my work, or my intelligence give me prestige? We look to the cosmetic ads to find out if we are as charming as anyone else and the liquor ads to learn if we are men of distinction. It is illuminating that we turn to these authorities to learn our value.

When our approval of ourselves depends on the prior approval of others then we are not free. We are at the mercy of the popular whim. If we are about the same shape all the way up and down and happen to be living in a time when this kind of figure is popular, perhaps we are fortunate. But most of us find ourselves falling short of the current idea of beauty in some respects, whatever it happens to be, and are sooner or later forced to think seriously of developing our own standard of approval. If we can do this and free ourselves from the idea that we are some kind of commodity whose worth depends on salability, we will have made a long stride in the direction of maturity and security.

Can men in our situation find a way to recover the inner authority of Socrates, who voluntarily accepted death rather than disobey the voice of God within him? His was the supreme example of self-assurance in the finest meaning of that term.

He needed no more evidence of his own worth than he carried within himself. I cannot believe that the secret of his poise and confidence in the face of the ultimate crisis is extinct. We have just mislaid it. We have lost it for the present, but it will turn up again. And whenever and wherever it does, men will acclaim it as the stuff of heroes, and will make it their own.

What, then, is the conclusion of the matter? First of all to understand that the only truth that counts for us is the truth we have today. We can live in no other time and in no other truth. If our enlightenment is a retreating will-o'-the-wisp kind of truth, a truth that will be sometime but somehow never is, it is no enlightenment at all. We can't be 21st century men in the 20th century. We have been so conditioned to think of posterity, to conserve our forests and natural resources, and to leave a heritage of blessing for generations to come that we are in a fair way to be tyrannized by the future. We must resolve not only to be free from the dead hand of the past, but from the as yet unformed hand of the future as well. The best thing we can do for posterity is to live true to ourselves in the present.

This means that we cannot put off the formulation of our faith. In our tradition, this responsibility we can't delegate. No one can take care of it for us. *We* must live in the *present* or we do not live at all. We have to think the great thought now, dream the inspired dream now and do the important work now—or we do not think, dream or act at all.

The great abundance of fossilized skeletons that are to be found in all parts of the world prove conclusively that the cœlacanth was once widespread in all the waters of the world. But this was many millions of years ago. Then for fifty million years it seemed to have disappeared entirely from the face of the earth. All this time, however, its life was going on in the depths of the dark canyons and gorges of the ocean. So it is with the most cherished values of mankind. Sometimes they seem to be on the way out. Other and lesser values appear to be submerging them. The family, as the locus of love and assurance, the warm hearthside, where husband and wife and children are held in affectionate regard just because they are themselves and they belong there, may sometimes seem doomed under the impact of our commercial culture. But it has a secret hardiness that will persist through eons of changes in the political and economic world. "Sweet love fills my heart for the queen," writes a young king, "and for her young children. Grant a long life to the royal daughters and to their children. May they keep the hand of the queen, their mother, eternally and forever!" These words were written 3,300 years ago by a Pharaoh of Egypt, the young Ikhnaten. Yet they are modern as though they were written yesterday.

Sometimes it may seem to us that the individual is lost in the welter of mass movements, big governents, big companies, big industries, big unions, big wars and all the colossi of our times. Then we need to be reminded by Confucius who wrote 2,500 years ago, "From the Son of Heaven Down to the mass of the people, all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of everything besides."

A NATIONAL PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

Establishment of a national public information office in New York City for the Council of Liberal Churches (Universalist-Unitarian) Inc. was announced here February 2 by Ernest W. Kuebler, Acting Administrator of the Council. The New York office, which is located at 270 Park Avenue, will be directed by Roland Gammon, author, editor and publicist.

The new public relations headquarters results from the vote of the Unitarian and Universalist denominations to federate in the Council of Liberal Churches, and gradually to merge such church departments as publicity, education and publications. The New York Office will be concerned with promoting the Council specifically and the cause of liberal religion generally, as well as disseminating news about the 179,403 Unitarians and Universalists and their 910 churches and fellowships in the United States and Canada. An internal information program among the churches also is being undertaken.

Joining in the announcement here today, Dr. Frederick M. Eliot, President of the American Unitarian Association, said, "The opening of the Division of Public Relations is an event of major importance for the whole cause of liberal religion on the American Continent. Through this office the voice of free religious faith will be heard, proclaiming the spiritual gospel that is the heritage of many elements in the religious life of America, including the Universalists and the Unitarians, which has never had adequate expression. In a period of spiritual anxiety and uncertainty the clear message of a *simple faith in the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God* should be welcomed by many who find little satisfaction in any form of authoritarian religion and yet recognize the total inadequacy of a secular point of view."

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